



COLLEGE
READINESS
THROUGH
MIDDLE SCHOOL
TRANSFORMATION

STAMFORD PUBLIC
SCHOOLS

College Board Forum
October 22, 2009



Stamford Public Schools prepares each and every student for higher education and success in the 21st century

Our Discussion Today

1. Describing the need for change—**WHY**
2. Community & partnerships—**WHO**
3. Our approach—**HOW**



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WHY: Middle School Transformation

- Twenty schools:
 - 12 elementary
 - 5 middle
 - 3 high

- 15,000 students

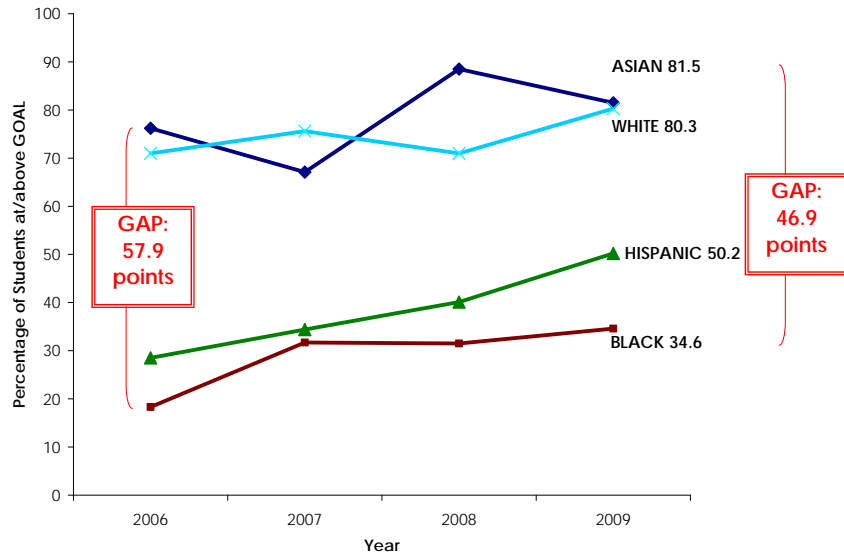
Asian	7%	Hispanic	30%
Black	22%	White	41%

Special Education 10%
English Language Learners 15%
Free/Reduced Lunch 42%



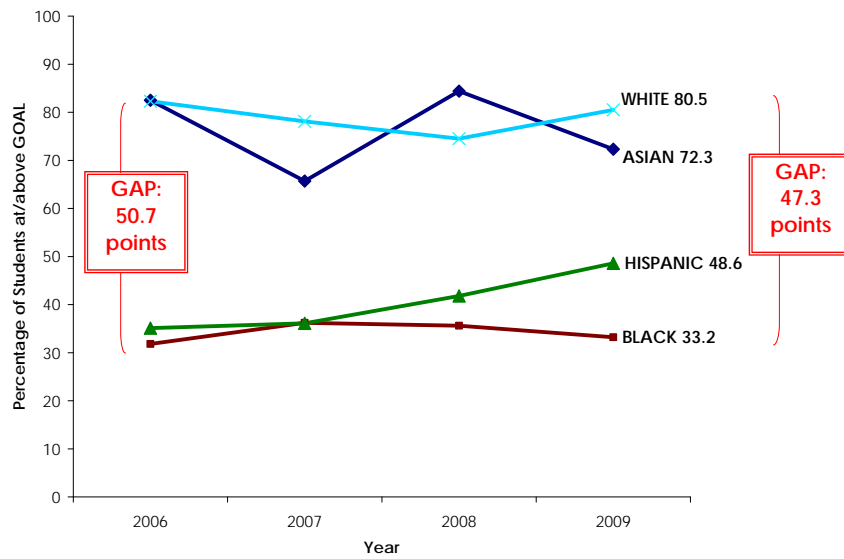
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Grade 6 MATH—CT State Tests



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Grade 6 READING—CT State Tests



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WHY: Middle School Transformation

- 4-5 ability groups at each middle school
- Stamford's hallmark of diversity

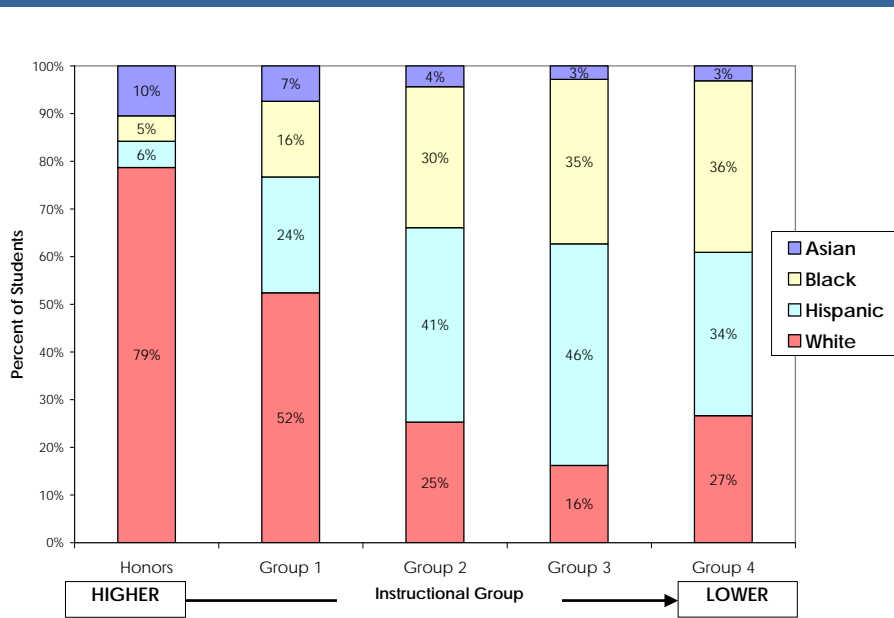


EDUCATION DEBT



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Distribution of Instructional Groups by Ethnicity—Fall 2007



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WHY: One piece of the research base

“Grouping practices, which teachers and administrators often say are not based on race but on ability or behavior, often have the effect of reinforcing racial separation. Unless the adults in the school are conscious of how this separation influences their own perceptions and those of students, over time this separation may be regarded as normal.”

Pedro Noguera, [Understanding the Link between Racial Identity and School-Related Behaviors](#), (2004)



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WHO: Community & Partnerships

INTERNAL COMMUNITY OF EDUCATORS:

- Board of Education goals
- SPS mission of college readiness for all
- Teachers and school leaders commitment to equity
- Central Office leaders organized to support the instructional core

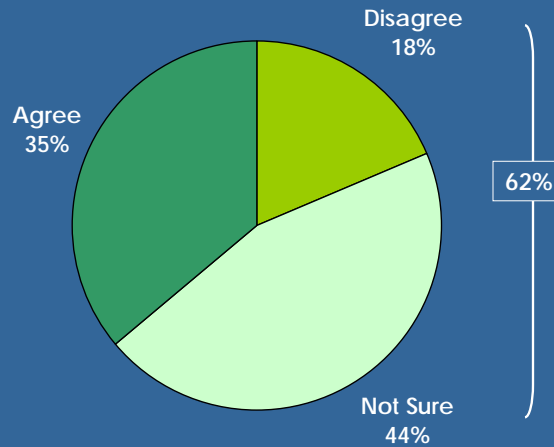
and still...



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WHO: Middle School Teachers Report...

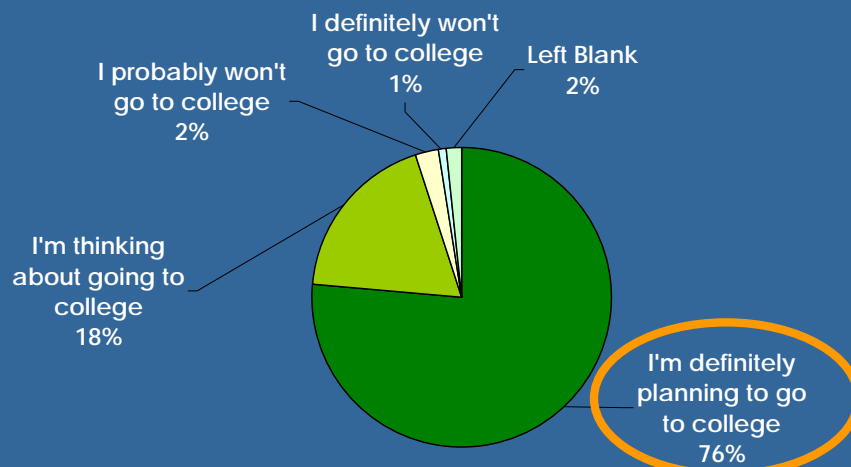
When my students graduate from high school, they will have the skills needed to succeed in COLLEGE



*Based on results of SPS Spring 2009 Survey of Teachers

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WHO: Middle School Students Think...



*Based on results of SPS Spring 2009 Survey of Grade 7 Students

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WHO: Community

Recommendation from a report on grouping:

To the extent that it is educationally feasible, the school board should take steps to eliminate ability grouping at all educational levels. Because many students remain through high school in the group to which they are originally assigned, particular attention should be given to the middle school, where the first assignment takes place.



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WHO: Community

Recommendation No. 2

To the extent that it is educationally feasible, the school board should take steps to eliminate ability grouping at all educational levels. Because many students remain through high school in the group to which they are originally assigned, particular attention should be given to the middle school, where the first assignment takes place.

**"School Desegregation in Stamford, Connecticut."
A report of the Connecticut Advisory Committee to
the United States Commission on Civil Rights,
JULY 1977**

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WHO: Community

Finding from 2008

Cambridge Education District Review:

Close gaps by: reducing, or eliminating, the number of tracks and ensuring the tracks which do exist are reflective of the district's diverse population.

"The effect of grouping students by tracking has not been formally investigated by the district but student outcomes, particularly within subgroups, suggest that this practice has a negative effect on impact on student aspiration and expectation as well as self esteem and motivation."

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WHO: What is our community saying now?

Growing awareness:



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WHO: What is our community saying now?

And continued unease:



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WHO: What is our community saying now?

Excerpts from Recent Letters to the Editor, Stamford Advocate:

IN SUPPORT OF CHANGE:

"...simple common sense tells me that ability grouping is segregation of the worst kind. That just should not be accepted by our society in 2009."

IN SUPPORT OF THE TRADITIONAL SYSTEM:

"Does everyone who wants to study at Juilliard get to do so? Does every Little League player who wants to be on the all-star team make it... No, because ability matters. If we understand it for sports, dance, music, why can't we understand it for academics?"

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WHO: Partnerships

- External accountability, financial support, or technical assistance from:
 - GE Foundation Developing Futures™ Program
 - Panasonic Foundation and CT Center for School Change
 - State of CT—Strategic District Improvement Plan
- Middle School Advisory Council
- Community Forums



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HOW: Three-Part Approach

1. CURRICULUM, INSTRUCTION & ASSESSMENT
2. EFFICACY
3. STRUCTURAL ORGANIZATION



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HOW: Curriculum, Instruction & Assessment

STRATEGY 1

- a) Standards-based curriculum in Math, Literacy/English Language Arts and Science in all schools, including professional development for all teachers and administrators
- b) District Benchmark Assessments in Math, Literacy/English Language Arts and Science to provide formative feedback
- c) Scientific research-based interventions (Response to Intervention) for each and every student who requires support, above and beyond the district-wide standards-based curriculum



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HOW: Efficacy

STRATEGY 2

- a) Professional development for teachers and administrators
- b) High expectations for students
- c) Training and support for families

- *Efficacy*: Smart is not something you are, it is something you become when you work hard
- Schools that embrace efficacy (1) focus on what they can do, rather than what they can't, (2) don't leave anything about teaching and learning to chance and (3) set their goals high.

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HOW: Structural Organization

STRATEGY 3

- a) Initial placement into one of two groups:
- College Prep
 - Honors
- b) Academic Enrichment Period twice weekly for math, twice weekly for English Language Arts
- c) Opportunities for re-grouping



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HOW: Phase-in of Strategies by Grade

	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012
GRADE 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PD for school administrators and all grade 6 teachers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦Math ◦Literacy ◦Science ◦Instructional strategies ◦Efficacy 	NEW INSTRUCTIONAL LEVELS FOR ALL GRADE 6 STUDENTS BASED ON NEW CRITERIA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing PD for all grade 6 teachers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦Math ◦Literacy ◦Science 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing PD for all grade 6 teachers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦Math ◦Literacy ◦Science
GRADE 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PD for all grade 7 teachers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦Math ◦Literacy ◦Science 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PD for all grade 7 teachers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Math ◦ Literacy ◦ Science ◦ Instructional strategies ◦ Efficacy 	NEW INSTRUCTIONAL LEVELS FOR ALL GRADE 7 STUDENTS BASED ON NEW CRITERIA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing PD for all grade 7 teachers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦Math ◦Literacy ◦Science
GRADE 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PD for all grade 8 teachers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦Math ◦Literacy ◦Science 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PD for all grade 8 teachers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦Math ◦Literacy ◦Science 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PD for all grade 8 teachers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Math ◦ Literacy ◦ Science ◦ Instructional strategies ◦ Efficacy 	NEW INSTRUCTIONAL LEVELS FOR ALL GRADE 8 STUDENTS BASED ON NEW CRITERIA

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HOW: How will we know it's working?

ADULTS WILL:	STUDENTS WILL:
✓ Participate in professional development	→ Demonstrate higher performance on state tests
✓ Demonstrate implementation of differentiated instructional strategies	→ Demonstrate higher performance on District Benchmark Assessments
✓ Demonstrate implementation of curriculum	→ Increase attendance
✓ Report increased confidence in student college readiness at higher rates	→ Report increased positive attitudes towards academics, social/emotional wellbeing, preparation for college
✓ Report increased instructional efficacy at higher rates	→ Take four years of math in high school at higher rates
✓ Provide ongoing feedback about classroom experiences	→ Take four years of science in high school at higher rates
	→ Participate in the SAT at higher rates
	→ Participate in AP coursework at higher rates
	→ Earn college credit at higher rates

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✓ WHY

✓ WHO

✓ HOW

OUR MISSION

The Stamford Public Schools prepares each and every student for higher education and success in the 21st century.

Questions/
Discussion



www.stamfordpublicschools.org